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# Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /011 R

66619
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APPROVED BY S/S-O:PJOHNSON
---------- 019973
O 182311Z NOV 74
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USCINCEUR VAIHAIGEN GERMANY IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

MILITARY COMMANDS HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

THE FOLLOWING REPEATS AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 2728
(DTG 181623Z NOV 74) ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO AMMAN BEIRUT CAIRO JIDDA KUWAIT TEL AVIV
TOKYO JERUSALEM USUN NEW YORK 18 NOVEMBER 1974. QUOTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2728

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PASS DIA, USCINCEUR, SECDEF AND USIA

TOKYO PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY
USCINCEUR FOR ECJ 2-O
USIA FOR INA

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, PFOR, SY
SUBJECT: DAMASCUS SITREP, NOVEMBER 17-18

1. SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM CALLED IN HEADS OF
ARAB DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, TO DESCRIBE
ISRAELI THREATS AND STATED IN ANSWER QUESTION FROM GR
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UP SYRIA

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WOULD NOT RPT NOT RENEW UNDOF MANDATE, KHADDAM LATER SAME EVENING
CALLED IN SOVEIT AMBASSADOR.
ON NOVEMBER 17, PRESIDENT ASAD RECEIVED LETTER FROM
BREZHNEV. SUBSEQUENTLY, RADIO AND PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT
SEVEN SOVIET WARSHIPS WILL MAKE OFFICIAL VISIT TO
LATAKIA FROM NOVEMBER 20-25. EMBASSY HAS REPORTS FROM
SEVERAL SOURCES THAT SARG HAS FULLY MOBILIZED
ITS RESERVES. SEVERAL TRIPS OUTSIDE DAMASCUS TO NORTH
AND SOUTH, HOWEVER, FAILED TO REVEAL ANY UNUSUAL
MILITARY ACTIVITIES. DAMASCUS ITSELF REMAINS FESTOONED
WITH BRIGHT LIGHTS AND BANNERS AS SARG HAS EXTENDED THROUGH
NEXT FRIDAY CELEBRATIONS MARKING FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF ASAD
TAKEOVER. END SUMMARY.

2. NEWSPAPERS REPORT INENSE DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY
IN DAMASCUS OVER THE WEEKEND. RADIO AND PRESS REPORT
FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM'S STATEMENT AND MEETING HE HELD WITH
RESIDENT ARAB DIPLOMATS. HE SAID ISRAEL HAS
BEEN "ESCALATING ITS TENDENTIOUS CAMPAIGN AGAINST
SYRIA" TO CONCEAL FROM WORLD ISRAEL'S REAL AGGRESSIVE
INTENTIONS AND TO DISTRACT ITS OWN CITIZENS FROM
CURRENT DOMESTIC PROBLEMS. KHADDAM REITERATED SARG
COMMITMENT TO CEASEFIRE BUT ADDED THAT SYRIA WILL RESPOND
TO ANY ISRAELI AGGRESSION. AMBASSADOR WAS INFORMED BY JORDANIAN
AMBASSADOR THAT IN ANSWER TO HIS QUESTION,
KHADDAM STATED IN FRONT OF ALL ARAB AMBS THAT HE HAD
INFORMED SYG WALDHEIM THAT SARG WOULD NOT RPT NOT RENEW
UNDOF MANDATE EXPIRING END NOVEMBER. THIS DECISION
TAKEN, FONMIN STATED, IN LIGHT NO PAST PROGRESS ON GOLAN WITHDRAWAL
AND NO FUTURE PROSPECT FOR SUCH WITHDRAWAL.

3. NEWSPAPERS REPORTED NOVEMBER 17 THAT PRESIDENT ASAD
HAD RECEIVED LETTER FROM PRESIDENT FORD THREE DAYS
BEFORE. ARTICLE ALSO NOTED THAT KHADDAM SAW SOVIET
AMBASSADOR SEPARATELY NOV 16 AFTER SEEING ARAB DIPLOMATS.
SOVIET AMBASSADOR MET WITH PRESIDENT ASAD AFTERNOON
OF NOVEMBER 16 AND AGAIN EVENING OF NOEVEMBER 17; DURING
LATTER MEETING HE DELIVERED LETTER FROM BREZHNEV.
NOV 18 RADIO AND PRESS HAVE REPORTED THAT SEVEN SOVIET
WARSHIPS, INCLUDING A CRUISER, DESTROYER, AND SUBMARINE
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WILL MAKE OFFICIAL VISIT TO LATAKIA BETWEEN NOVEMBER 20
AND 25. NAVAL FORCE WILL BE UNDER COMMAND OF VICE
ADMIRAL NICOLAI KHOVRIN.

4. EMBASSY HAS SEVERAL REPORTS THAT SARG MAY HAVE BEGUN MOBILI-
ATION OF ITS RESERVES AS EARLY AS NOV 11.
ONE SYRIAN EMPLOYEE REPROTS THAT ARMY RESERVISTS WERE
CALLED UP ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY (NOVEMBER 11 AND 12)

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FROM HIS VILLAGE OF JUDAIT ARTUZ, LOCATED SOUTHWEST OF
DAMASCUS. SAME SOURCE WHO HAS BROTHER IN RIFAT ASAD'S
PALACE DEFENSE FORCE (PDF) SAYS THAT PDF WAS ON ALERT
ALL OF LAST WEEK AND REMAINS SO. SOURCE CLAIMS THIS ALERT
IS RESULT OF CURRENT DOMESTIC PROBLEMS (SEE SEPTEL).
THERE IS REPORT FROM AMERICAN-TRAINED DOCTOR THAT ARMY HAS PRE-
PARED LIST OF DOCTORS TO DRAFT IN CASE OF WAR (HE BING ON LIST)
BUT THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO CALL UP. WEST GERMAN CHARGE
TELLS US ALL HIS SOURCES REPORT SYRIAN ARMY FULLY MOBILIZED.

5. AMBASSADOR AND HOSKINSON RETURNED TO DAMASCUS FROM
ALEPPO ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 18. (THIS MAIN ARTERY FOR
TRAFFIC FROM NORTHERN SYRIA AND LATAKIA.) THEY SAW
ROUGHLY DOZEN TANKS INCLUDING ONE T-62 N TRANSPORTS
HEADED SOUTH TOWARD DAMASCUS. NONE HAD TURRETS OR
CREWS. BRITISH AMBASSADOR REPORTS HIS EMBOFF COUNTED 17
T-54'S AT 1700 HRS NOVEMBER 17, MOVING SOUTH TOWARD
SUWEIDA ON BACK ROAD FROM DAMASCUS. UK EMBOFF ALSO
VISITED SASA AND KISWA (SOUTHWEST OF DAMASCUS) SAME
AFTERNOON AND SAW NO MILITARY MOVEMENT, BUT DID NOTE
ANTIAIRCRAFT EMPLACEMENTS WERE UNCOVERED AND MANNED.
EMBOFF, WHO TRAVELED DAMASCUS/DERAA ROAD SOUTHWARD
DURING MORNING AND NORTHWARD DURING LATE AFTERNOON,
STATES THAT LIFE IN THE LARGE MILITARY
CAMPS LOCATED ALONG ROAD WITHIN 10 KMS OF DAMASCUS
APPEARED COMPLETELY NORMAL: MOTOR POOL PARKING AREAS
FULL OF UNATTENDED AND EMPTY VEHICLES; SPORTS MATCHES
IN PROGRESS; MANY HITCHHIKERS ON ROAD.
SAME CASUAL ATMOSPHERE SEEN AT NEBECK MILITARY CAMP
70 KMS NORTH OF CITY.

6. LIFE IN DAMASCUS APPEARS NORMAL. THERE NO UNUSUAL
SIGNS OF MILITARY MOVEMENT AND NO EVIDENCE OF
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HOARDING WHICH IS CUSTOMARY SIGN THAT PUBLIC FEARS
IMMINENT WAR. NO SHORTAGE OF BREAD, MEAT OR GASOLINE.
SARG HAS EXTENDED THROUGH NOVEMBER 22 CELEBRATIONS MARKING
FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF ASAD TAKEOVER. CITY REMAINS FESTOONED WITH
LIGHTS, BANNERS, AND FLAGS. THERE HEIGHTENED CONCERN BY MANY
SYRIANS WHOM WE HAVE CONTACTED THAT WAR MAY BREAK OUT
BUT ALL SEEM SHARE CONVICTION THAT IF IT DOES, IT WILL
BE ISRAELIS WHO INITIATE HOSTILITIES.
MURPHY

UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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**TAGS:** MOPS, PFOR, SY, UR
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